

Legislative News



April 30, 2010

Access Missouri Bill Heard in Senate Education Committee

This week the [Senate Education Committee](#) heard testimony about [HB 1473](#), a bill that would make several changes to the [Access Missouri program](#). Changes include lowering the GPA required for certain lower-division students to receive renewal awards from a 2.5 to a 2.0; equalizing award amounts for students at public universities, Linn State, and private colleges and universities starting in 2014; increasing the maximum award for community college students starting in 2014; and removing "sunset" language that would end the Access

Missouri program in 2013 unless it was reauthorized by the General Assembly.

Committee members' questions focused on whether lowering the GPA requirement is a lowering of standards. Bill sponsor [Representative Mike Thomson](#) indicated that the intention is simply to give students an opportunity to adjust to the increased rigor of college coursework. He also pointed out that Access Missouri is a need-based award and, as such, should be focused primarily on help-

ing financially needy students.

Committee members also asked about the [agreement](#) reached by higher education leaders about Access Missouri. They wanted to know who attended the meeting, what the final agreements were, and what motivated the leaders to come to consensus.

The committee did not vote on the bill this week. Committee chair [Senator David Pearce](#) indicated that they would likely do so next week.

Budget Truly Agreed and Finally Passed

Both chambers of the General Assembly passed the conference committee reports on the 13 operating budget bills this week.

The major changes for higher education for FY 2011 include:

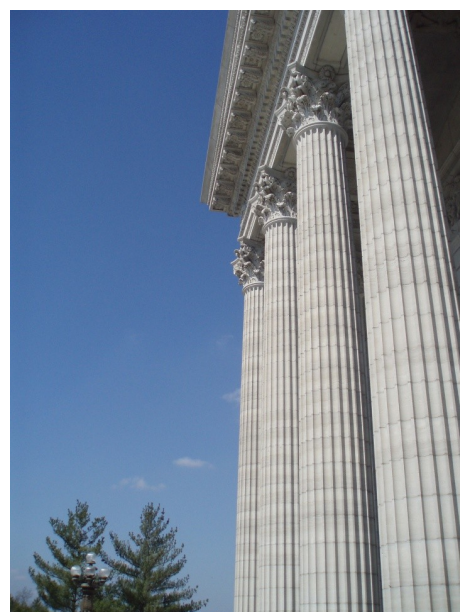
[Access Missouri](#): Carrying forward the entire \$13 million withholding from FY 2010, leaving a total appropriated amount of \$82.8 million.

[Bright Flight](#): No increase to correspond with the statutory changes expanding eligibility and increasing award amounts. Language in the final bill restricts the FY 2011 awards to \$2,000 for students scoring in the top

3%.

Institutional operating budgets: Overall reduction of \$50 million (5.2%). This reduction is consistent with the Governor's recommendation and preserves an agreement between the governor and the institutions to freeze in-state undergraduate tuition for the 2010-11 academic year.

The Governor will now have the opportunity to sign the bills as passed or reduce budgeted items through vetoes. The governor must take action on each bill within approximately 45 days of the end of session which is May 14.





Rebooting Government Resolutions Move to the House

Next week, the [House Higher Education Committee](#) will be hearing two resolutions that would dramatically reorganize the education system: [SJR 44](#), which changes the number of departments in the executive branch of government, and [SJR 45](#), a resolution that describes what the governing board of the new department of education would look like. These two resolutions were passed in the Senate last week, SJR 44 with unanimous support and little debate, and SJR 45 after considerable debate and some

amendments.

The committee will hear these resolutions on Tuesday, May 4 at 8:00 a.m. in HR6.

Nixon Discusses Tax Credit Reform

In an effort to gain support for tax credit reform, [Governor Nixon](#) hosted two conference calls this week with educational leaders from around the state. One call was with elementary and secondary education leaders and the other with leaders from higher education. During the calls, the Governor urged educational leaders to raise awareness about the effects of tax credits with their boards and communities, and to contact their legislators to discuss the issue.

The higher education call was hosted

by Brady Deaton, chancellor of the [University of Missouri-Columbia](#) and vice-chair of the Council on Public Higher Education (COPHE); and Marcia Pfeiffer, president of [St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley](#) and chair of the Missouri Community College Association (MCCA) Presidents/Chancellors Council.



Upcoming Committee Meetings

The [House Higher Education Committee](#) will meet on Tuesday, May 4 at 8:00 a.m. in HR 6. The committee is expected to hear the following bills:

[SJR 45](#) [Shields](#), which modifies the State Board of Education.

[SJR 44](#) [Shields](#), which proposes a constitutional amendment to eliminate each state department within the executive branch.

[SCR 31](#) [Pearce](#), which encourages students and faculty in Missouri to promote international education as part of curricular and extracurricular life at Missouri's colleges and universities.